



News Release

**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Norfolk District

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Norfolk District
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lake Drummond reservation closed to overnight camping

Due to safety, emergency response and staffing concerns, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will close the Lake Drummond Reservation on the Dismal Swamp Canal to overnight camping effective June 17. The reservation will still be open from sunrise to sunset daily for boating, picnicking, fishing, and wildlife observation and photography. Facilities used to portage watercraft from the canal to the lake will be also be operational during daytime hours.

While the Lake Drummond Reservation has become used increasingly over recent years by individuals and groups seeking a nearby, unique overnight camping experience, the reservation itself, lying along the Dismal Swamp Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, has never been designated or funded as a campground. Funding has been limited to operation of the Dismal Swamp Canal as a Navigation and Flood Damage Reduction Mission, precluding the Corps from operating the Reservation as an official camping area or hiring a park ranger for that facility

Corps safety assessments

Prompted by safety incidents and fatalities on its facilities, Army Corps of Engineers offices nationwide have conducted assessments, over the past year, to examine potential safety risks and liabilities to citizens and the federal government. The Corps' Norfolk District conducted a similar assessment over the past several months to determine the responsible and appropriate actions to take for each of its facilities.

As a result of the assessment, the Norfolk District determined that it could not responsibly allow overnight camping to continue on the facility, given 1) the increase in camping use and lack of staffing and funding to monitor overnight use, 2) the isolation of the facility to reasonable emergency response in the event of injury or incidents and 3) the potential risk to emergency responders attempting to access the isolated facility at night.

Incidents attest to safety hazards and concerns

Two incidents occurring during this assessment period demonstrate the concerns that nighttime operations related to the canal and Lake Drummond Reservation can pose both for campers and emergency responders. In Sept. 2006, a canoeist drowned in the Dismal Swamp Canal near the Chesapeake Campground. The subsequent nighttime search for the body had to be suspended due to safety concerns for the responders. Another telling incident occurred this past Mar. 24 during a daytime incident at the Lake Drummond reservation when a Boy Scout broke his leg. It took emergency responders 45 minutes in good daytime conditions to respond once contacted.

The decision, which was nearly a year in the making, was a result of many coordination meetings between the Corps, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the City of Chesapeake, the Chesapeake Police Department and others. The possibility of another agency providing security and management of the site was a key topic; however none were able to invest the funding and manpower to support overnight camping.

Citizens with questions or wishing to comment on this closure may do so by sending their questions/comments to: Norfolk District USACE, Operations Branch, c/o Joel Scussel, 803 Front Street, Norfolk, VA 23510 or electronically to joel.f.scussel@usace.army.mil.